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FM AMEMBASSY LISBON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 6944
INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 0060
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 0084

C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 001782

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/23/2018
TAGS: [PTER](#) [SNAR](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [CO](#) [PO](#)
SUBJECT: PORTUGAL LIKELY TO OPT FOR INDIRECT PRESSURE ON
THE FARC

REF: SECSTATE 77205

Classified By: Dana M. Brown, Pol-Econ Officer, Embassy Lisbon
Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Portugal agrees that Colombian insurgent groups, which continue to hold more than 700 captives hostage, are using a cruel and inhumane tactic and should be urged to stop immediately. MFA Director for South American Affairs Joao Baptista told us that Portugal fully agrees with our criticism of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), National Liberation Army (ELN), and other hostage takers, but said the European Union presidency would ultimately be in charge of deciding whether to issue a statement on behalf of EU member states. He speculated that France would be willing to do so, given its long-standing interest in Ingrid Betancourt's plight.

12. (C) While discussing bilateral efforts to pressure the FARC, Baptista lamented indications that the Swiss and French might have attempted to bribe the FARC for the prisoner release. He stressed that Portugal would not support any EU effort to circumvent Colombian government authority. When asked whether Portugal would weigh in with President Chavez to encourage constructive comments that pressure the FARC, Baptista replied that Portuguese PM Socrates could raise the issue during Chavez's visit to Portugal on July 23 and 24. On the issue of foreign support for the FARC, Baptista confirmed that the Portuguese government does not offer material or political support to the FARC (or any other terrorist group). He did acknowledge, however, that the national Communist Party had invited the FARC to attend its annual conference in Lisbon and would probably host a FARC member as it did last year. He said the authorities would be able to keep out any known FARC leader listed on the Shengen area watchlist, but could do little to prevent FARC rank and file travel in Europe.

13. (C) Comment: Although Portugal does not have leverage to pressure the FARC, the GOP's ability to quietly encourage Chavez in the right direction should help bolster pressure indirectly. The GOP has told us repeatedly that it views such behind-the-scenes talks with Chavez as the best way to engage and nudge the GOV closer to U.S. and EU policies. Moreover, given that the GOP's message would encourage Chavez to maintain course, the it is very likely to mention the FARC during his visit. End comment.
Stephenson